

This year sees the first edition of the Worshipful Company of Clockmakers' student competition *Picturing Time*. And with over 250 entries from universities all over the UK, the watch world is already showing a great deal of interest in the proceedings. **Tracey Llewellyn** finds out a little more about the event from the Company's Roy Harris FBHI and competition judge Martin Kemp, Professor Emeritus in History of Art at Trinity College, Oxford.

The horology industry in the UK has long recognised the importance of encouraging new talent into the industry and nurturing those who show special promise and to this end, the Worshipful Company of Clockmakers launched its *Picturing Time* competition in August 2010. The underlying purpose of the competition, which was open to all relevant UK students, was to create interest and awareness in various facets of time and use illustration, graphic design, animation or photography to show a meaningful understanding of horology or a related subject.

The closing date for entries was 31 March 2011, by which time approximately 250 students from 33 universities and colleges had submitted entries, which will be evaluated by an eminent panel of judges consisting of luxury product designer Christoph Belling, information design expert Peter Grundy, Professor Martin Kemp, graphic designer and director Brian Webb and *QP's* very own James Gurney. Twenty-five finalists will be selected over the coming weeks before three winners and three 'highly commended' pieces are chosen on 1 August.



Roy Harris FBHI



Professor Martin Kemp





The aim of *Picturing Time* is to get students thinking about time in new ways and to promote horology within the UK.

An exhibition of the finalists' entries will take place at the Sotheby's Colonnade Gallery in London's Bond Street between 27 July and 5 August 2011 and prizes totaling £2,750 will be presented at a reception sponsored by Vacheron Constantin in association with *QP* magazine to be held at Sotheby's on 4 August.

Shortlisted entries will also be showcased at the Saatchi Gallery between 10 and 12 November 2011 during *SalonQP* and will appear in a future issue of *QP* magazine.

**TL Roy, what was the main idea behind the competition?**

RH The purpose of the Horology Industry Advisory Panel – which was originally formed by the Company's Court in 1981 as the Horological Industries Committee – is to promote horology and all the skills of clock and watchmaking. Over the years we have run several competitions for schools, amateur clockmakers and professionals in horology but *Picturing Time* is one of the biggest we have done and has captured the imaginations of the entire industry.

Initially we were going to make *Picturing Time* open to anyone but, after discussion, we decided to focus on UK art students, the entry criteria is still quite broad, however, and we accepted entries from graphic art, fine art, photography and animation.

**TL How did you spread the word about the competition?**

RH We created a database of all UK universities and colleges offering art-related courses. We then sent out over 300 letters inviting participation and ended up with about 90 institutions taking part – some even included it as part of the coursework.

**TL What guidelines were students given by the Company?**

RH We gave no instructions at all. For us this is all about getting students to open their minds to looking at time. Some of the entries we have had have been far from self-explanatory but they are exciting in themselves as they show that people are thinking about the whole concept of time and bringing in their own interpretation.

**TL The judging panel is made up of people hugely influential within their own fields. How did you decide whom to ask and what reaction did you receive?**

RH Liverymen of the Company suggested various people to be judges – all from very different backgrounds and all eminent in their own fields. After a certain amount of discussion, five potential people were chosen and, when asked to get involved, they all accepted. We are honoured to have them all on board. As with the students, the judges have not been given any guidelines but will all bring their own expertise to the



Joining Professor Martin Kemp on the *Picturing Time* panel of judges is Christoph Behling, Peter Grundy, James Gurney and Brian Webb.

judging procedure both in choosing the 25 finalists and the eventual three winners.

MK A member of the Clockmakers Company – Paul Jarrett – whom I had met at Cambridge but had not spoken to in some 40 years put my name forward. When the Company contacted me I immediately thought it was a hugely worthwhile project, especially as it is aimed at young artists and creators who need that first step towards recognition.

**TL Martin, some QP readers won't know your background, tell us a bit about yourself.**

MK I started my academic career at Cambridge in natural sciences but later changed to visual arts. My main interest is in art history and images from science, covering anything from the Renaissance to the modern day, from Christ to Coca Cola.

**TL Do you see a natural link between art and time?**

MK Yes. As I said earlier, my interest is in the union of art and science, and space and time are an underlying theme in art. I once built a clock myself to try and add to my understanding of Renaissance paintings. It's interesting that before the 17th century timekeeping as we know it today did not exist and alternative methods of regular beat such as musical time or human pulse were utilised. Remember that Harrison was not a trained



clockmaker – he began as a carpenter and made some early timekeepers in wood. So it was in fact an artist that eventually solved the age old problem of longitude.

I truly believe that it is educationally dangerous to have people in the arts and humanities who are largely ignorant of the sciences and technologies. I am keen on anything that takes artists and persuades them to think about technology.

**TL So do you think that it is right for art and design to have so much influence in something as scientific as timekeeping?**

MK Clock and watchmaking is in a very special position and is really the pinnacle of craftsmanship involving everything from the cosmetic aspects of design to technical intricacies. I think that we sometimes forget that clocks at the top end have always been expensive objects – the patrons of Mudge and Tompion expected their timekeepers to look good and perform well.

There is a big difference between design and fashion. When product designers are in it for a quick buck, it is usually quite obvious. But there are many instances where a designer really gets under the skin of a project. Basically, if an object has function it needs designing, the two are integrated and one feeds off the other.

**TL What do you hope to see throughout your *Picturing Time* involvement?**

MK I hope to see something that lies outside my expectations! I am going along with high hopes but no pre-conceived ideas.

**TL How relevant do you think competitions like *Picturing Time* are?**

MK I have always had reservations about

competitions in the visual arts as the real value of a piece of work is about how a spectator relates to an object and that is necessarily a very individual thing. That said, they are useful as showcases and do give young artists their first step on the ladder to recognition. Competitions are not the Holy Grail but they are functional in so far as they give a boost to the winner without damning the unsuccessful. The fact that the finalists will also be able to show their entries at the Saatchi Gallery during SalonQP in November is a real bonus.

*Picturing Time* has done an incredible job in getting so many colleges involved and I am pleased that there are plans for it to become a regular competition – I think we will see a very positive cumulative effect over the next five years or so as it becomes established.

**TL How do you see the future for clock and watchmaking?**

MK I am not too pessimistic for the future. Personally I am a techno junkie but I know that the hand and eye can still deliver things that digital can't and there will always be a demand for this. We don't have to lament and moan about progress but we should be positive about traditional techniques in new realms. High tech allows us to have speed and complexity but hand-made is more instinctual. The two should not be seen as mutually exclusive.

**Further information:** [www.clockmakers.org](http://www.clockmakers.org)

